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CURRENT OPINION

Our Debt to Northern Israel

After briefly reviewing the history of North Israel especially from the point of view of the influence of its history on religion and prophecy, F. J. Fookes Jackson, writing under the above caption in the *Interpreter* for April, sums up the debt as follows: North Israel inspired Judaism with all that was best in it. In Israel almost all the great deeds of early heroism were wrought. Of the judges, only Othniel was of Judah, Israel inaugurated prophecy; Samuel, Elijah Elisha, Jonah, Micaiah, Amos, Hosea, all belonged to the Northern Kingdom. The writer goes on to say that Christianity could hardly have emanated from Jerusalem. We must go to Galilee "to the land of Zebulun and Naphtali" for the beginnings of that great revolution in human ideals. There, as in the ninth and tenth centuries before, so in the first century, we find a freedom of ideas, a larger sympathy with mankind than ever characterized Jerusalem. The Galileans of our Lord's day displayed many of the qualities of a free race. The fiction that the Ten Tribes vanished completely receives no support in the canonical books of the Old Testament.

Precocious Sin—Consciousness

In editorial comment in the *Homiletic Review* for June, the editor says: "One of the most mischievous forms of our religious inheritance from days when men held more naïve conceptions of the human soul is the idea that young children may be 'sinners' fully conscious of their violations of God's will and therefore subject to all the conditions of repentance and conversion. But the very occasional infant prodigy should no more be taken as establishing a norm in the order of religious consciousness any more than the musical or mathematical prodigy in their corresponding orders.

Little children normally have no sin-consciousness, for the simple reason that their minds are not sufficiently developed to perceive the moral values of experience, nor have they had those experiences vitally destructive of their selfhoods and therefore sinful. An abnormal consciousness of moral values and religious experience may however be created for children by adults suggesting ideas and inducing feelings to their impressionable and indiscriminating stage of development. The grave danger is the creation of an artificial condition of the soul, and by hastening the ripening of the functions of life precociously and thus of curtailing the energies of later years as well as the normal fruitage of the soul.

On the True Position of John, Chap. 6

Charles Foxley, writing in the *Interpreter*, for April, upholds a position suggested by Norris in the *Journal of Theology* but which failed to meet with much recognition, to the effect that John, chap. 6., has been misplaced and that its true place is between chaps. 4 and 5. His reasons he gathers under the following heads: (1) Connection of time and space: John chap. 4, leaves Christ at Cana of Galilee, John chap. 5 takes him to Jerusalem but does not bring him back, to Galilee. John, chap. 6 opens with his voyage across the Sea of Galilee and John 7:1 explains Christ's presence in Galilee in a way which is hardly necessary when John chap. 6, left him there. When the order chaps. 4, 6, 5, 7 is adopted, we have Christ first at Cana on the west of the lake in 4:43-54. He both crosses the lake and returns again to the west side in chap. 6, and goes up to Jerusalem in chap. 6. (2) Arrangement of the miracles: On the proposed rearrangement, the miracles fall naturally into four pairs of closely related miracles, performed two each in Cana, at the sea of

Galilee, in Jerusalem, and Judea, in order, (3) Arrangement of the festivals: "The unknown feast" of John, chap. 5, if placed between chap. 6 and 7, would give a complete series of Jewish feasts in order, each connected with a miracle of Jesus and with special teaching suitable to the feast and linking on to the miracle. Finally, says Foxley, chap. 7 seems to grow naturally out of chap. 5; especially does 7:19-24 follow on 5:16 and 5:46.

Christian Unity

The united church of the future, in order to be a really Christian and catholic organization, must provide for the religious satisfaction of man along the lines of his rational and logical powers, as do the Unitarians; along the lines of his emotions, as do revivalists of the Wesleyan type; and along the lines of ritual and liturgy, as do the Episcopalians. Such is the opinion of Right Reverend Franklin S. Spalding, Protestant Episcopal bishop of Utah, as expressed in a lengthy contribution to the *May Atlantic*. What is necessary is an organization of religion which shall, with equal authority and credit, provide for these three forms of religious need, so that one in search of his soul's health may pass from one to the other with no more suspicion or loss of standing than a citizen of Massachusetts experiences in going from Boston to Los Angeles in search of his bodily health.

In accomplishing the work of Christian unity, a number of conditions and circumstances must be recognized as having a large and vital bearing on the situation.

In the first place, the present movement for union among the churches has a close relation to the new social sense. So long as the chief business of ecclesiastical organizations was to teach dogmas and creeds, isolation was inevitable and desirable. But combination is necessary for efficiency when religious bodies accept the obligation of

social service either on the home field or in the foreign mission field.

Interest in social science, however, may make us forget that the churches are not primarily organized charity societies and social settlements. The danger, today, is that those who are planning for Christian unity, in their zeal to supply man's physical needs, will forget that he also has spiritual needs. The business of the church is to do something more than serve tables. The social expert must be viewed as a friendly outsider; and the movement for Christian unity must be treated as a religious, not as a humanitarian, movement.

The dogmatic theologian cannot be accepted as a guide to unity. Writers of creeds are rarely able to see when their task is done. The attempts of theologians to substitute for the religion of Jesus their various theological speculations have caused more disunion than concord. Their positions are more often challenges to warfare than invitations to peace. Again, the movement for unity is not philosophical or metaphysical, but religious. The Nicene, or the Augustinian, or the mediaeval theologies, each and all, no more exhaust the full meaning of man's relation to God than the Ptolemaic, the Newtonian, or the Darwinian theories of the physical universe exhaust the full meaning of man's relation to nature. Systems of theology are ways of approach, and not ends of journeys. For one ecclesiastical organization to suppose that its creedal statement expresses the final truth about God and immortality is as absurd as to suppose that Newton's *Principia* or Darwin's *Origin of Species* gives final and complete knowledge of sky and earth. To assert that the sacramental means of grace performed by one accredited order of priests is the only way of appropriating divine strength is as untrue as it would be to claim that one type of engine utilizes the whole power of steam. The real value of any movement for Christian unity depends on

the progress it makes toward securing for all an adequate expression of their religious life.

An obstacle to unity is found in the inconsistent way in which even enlightened thinkers use the Bible as an authority. Very few advocates of verbal inspiration can be found today. Indeed, most leaders of thought in all the churches have accepted in part at least the higher criticism. But when it comes to the proof texts of their own sectarian basis, then they forget their modern scholarship and criticism, and go back to verbal inspiration. The interpretation of the Bible which is really being read today is not issued in the interest of any sect, but by publishers bidding for a wider circle of readers than the membership of any one society. They encourage non-partisan teachers in non-sectarian universities to publish their opinions; and even sectarian teachers, writing for commentaries like the *Expositors'*, the *International*, and the *Westminster*, or for modern Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias, make an earnest effort not to write as special pleaders, but as careful and judicious scholars. Why need there be any more bias in the mind of the investigator of spiritual problems than in the mind of the investigator of scientific matters? Perhaps when we make religion, and not theology, the important matter, partisanship will cease.

None of the churches of today appropriate the Christian heritage, because they are interested in dogma rather than life. Those who boast that they are "historic" overlook the values of the last five hundred years of Christian history; while the non-conformist churches fail to make their own the treasures of the first five hundred years. Christian unity will never come until the followers of Jesus Christ realize that his religion depends, not upon exact thinking, but upon Christlike living.

Shall the Jews Reclaim Jesus?

This is the question asked by Dr. Stephen S. Wise, the Jewish rabbi of the

Free Synagogue in New York. He would reclaim Jesus as the "Jew of Jews." He characterizes him as "a teacher, a leader, a prophet, clear visioned, tenderly loving, selfless, godlike though not uniquely godly, and not humanly divine but divinely human." Rabbi Wise would reject the dogmatic teaching of Paul but claim Jesus as the Jews' own. Rabbi Wise says that "in appropriating their elder brother, Jesus, the Jews are not urging a single step toward Christianity but accepting the Jewish teachings of Jesus the Jew."

The Attitude of Missionaries toward the Historical Criticism of the Bible

Dean Bosworth of Oberlin Theological Seminary, writing for the *Chinese Recorder* on the subject of "The Attitude of Missionaries toward the Historical Criticism of the Bible," sets out by first defining the meaning of the term "historical criticism" as an attempt to find out *What actually happened*, in regard to the many questions which Bible study raises. He summarizes his reflections as follows:

1. The missionary should be familiar with the chief results of historical criticism and the principal positions of both the conservative and radical schools. Missionaries will otherwise be discredited in the eyes of Japanese and Chinese students who have returned from universities in Germany, England, France, and America, more or less familiar with the results of historical biblical criticism, particularly of the more radical type, where the spirit of historical criticism has prevailed in all other departments of learning. Their estimate of the missionaries will greatly influence the opinion of the intelligent and influential classes. This will prove more so in the future than in the past. Familiarity with the results of critical scholarship will win confidence from educated Chinese and Japanese.

2. The attitude of religious leaders and teachers toward historical criticism should be tolerant and sympathetic. The genius of historical criticism has been a passion for truth, a determination to find out "what actually happened."

3. Religious leaders will discover and utilize the evangelistic value of historical criticism. The chief result of historical criticism has been that it has shown that the Bible has sprung out of the religious experience of men with God. This makes an evangelistic appeal of unsurpassed power. The priceless collections incorporated in our Gospels, for example, were intimately knit up with the life of many Christians living in fellowships with their risen Lord. They came to them not merely as the attested words of the historical Jesus but as the message of the living Lord working in the experience of many believers. The historical study of Paul's letters throws us back on his own profound religious experience. The historical process brings us back to an ultimate and elemental experience, the experience of souls of men in fellowship with God. The emphasis has been slowly transferred from the book to the life-experience out of which it sprang. Where this result has established itself in the Christian conscious of the church, unembarrassed by controversy over minor points, it will constitute a great asset for evangelism.

The scientific spirit is entering China and China is certain in common with the Western world to lay the chief emphasis upon the phenomena of life. Then it will be a distinct advantage to Christianity to be recognized as a religion which goes back of its book and places supreme emphasis upon the life that gave it birth, rather than on the book itself. The primitive oriental Asiatic Christianity which is being brought to light in historical criticism may prove more intelligible to the modern Asiatic oriental mind than the more com-

plicated theological Christianity which was developed in Europe in the post-apostolic and Middle Ages and which constituted the necessary adjustment of Christianity to the ideas and thought of those times. Christianity is greater than its theology, and its true greatness becomes evident only when those elements that gave it birth are rediscovered, re-emphasized, and reproduced in modern experience. Very significantly Christianity is the first of the great religions of the world to subject its sacred literature to a most thorough and scientific investigation. This work has been done not by hostile outsiders but by Christian men themselves. Thus has Christianity been preparing to make the evangelistic conquest of the world.

International Christianity

The flurry over the Japanese question in California was made the occasion for a dinner given by Count Okuma, attended by leading Japanese statesmen and American visitors, at which John R. Mott, Hamilton W. Mabie, and Dr. F. G. Peabody represented the desire of the American people for peace. Count Okuma recognized the provocations and said that the dependence in the end must be not on diplomacy or courts, or commerce, but on the control of the Christian spirit. He appealed to the United States and to California to be Christian in the treatment of other nations.

Japanese Women and the Problems of the Present Day

Miss Unie Tsuda, a pioneer educator of women in Japan, under the above caption, in the *International Review of Missions*, of April, 1912, discusses the present condition of the Japanese woman. Prior to the introduction into, and the dominance of Buddhism and Confucianism in Japan, her women held a high position. Women were even sovereign rulers of Japan. But

Buddhism and Confucianism degraded their status, the former considered the chief virtue of woman to consist in humility, the latter, obedience. Thus they deprived woman of her positive virtues and positive value. Then with the coming of the Western ideals of womanhood, the state of woman has been greatly altered. The woman of today, stimulated by her education and the consequent broadening of her horizon, is very much in danger of emphasizing, in an ill-balanced aggressiveness, her place in society. She is influenced, too, by the extremely radical views of some women in the West. The mother, with her old passive ideals of womanhood, is utterly incapable of appreciating the assertions of her daughter for freedom and recognition. Many a man, though modern in political, intellectual and commercial matters, is very conservative in his views of woman. He still thinks the old ideals of womanhood are more to be desired than the new. So the present clash between the old and the new ideals, in general, and particularly, of woman, is inevitable; and it is causing no small concern and reflection. Add to this the employment of girls and women in business and industry, creating social and moral problems. What is the best agency which will conserve the best ideas of the past, assimilate them with the choice elements of the new, and thus produce the highest type of womanhood attainable under the present state of civilization? Miss Tsuda considers this agency is the Christian religion.

Buddhism gave to woman humility, but at the price of self-effacement and degradation, not by the teaching of lofty ideals for her. It

took away her individuality, even her soul. . . . Christianity places woman on a level with man. Her individuality and worth in herself is recognized, and full scope is given to her powers. At the same time by teaching self-sacrifice and service founded on the higher, broader ideal of love for others, it replaces the narrow old standard of self-sacrifice for the group of one's family.

Why the Jews Have Succeeded

Dr. Charles Eliot, speaking at Boston, Mass., on May 5, on the occasion of the fifth annual dinner of the Harvard Menorah Society, attributed the success of the Jewish race to its ideals of rare significance, strength, and power. The first of these has been that of one God to which the race has been true under the most distressing and trying of all environments. The second Jewish ideal is the ideal of the family, an ideal fertile for permanence in human society. The third is the ethics of the Ten Commandments—the most compact and effective code that has ever been written among any people.

These ideals have been maintained four thousand years under circumstances of great sacrifice, persecution, and physical suffering. Loyalty to ideals has been the source of the tremendous influence of Jewish ideals in the world. The Jewish ideals have been spiritual. Can they in America meet the test of liberty, political, industrial, and social, denied in former centuries? If they meet the test successfully the Jewish race will get over its apparent tendency of the moment toward materialism and will return to its traditional ideals which are spiritual, religious, lofty, and pure.